1:Murphy and Quain E-4,5 (1938) 1955
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Agendas were ordinarily based on the immediate needs of the household or the desire for some variety in their diet. Food, however, was shared widely, and this probably robbed most work of any sense of urgency. Apparently, each man's plans for the day were determined in part by the season, in part by the household needs, and in part by what he felt like doing.

Some men stayed in the village all day, sleeping and working intermittently at small tasks. The women spent more time in the village than the men. Their work was done in the house or, if outside, in the shade of the house. Since male work was done largely in the morning, most of the men had ample time in the afternoon for trade, wrestling, and other diversions. The trade game was an especially popular indoor activity on rainy days.

Much less work was probably done during the rainy season, for planting would be finished, the *piquí* would be harvested, and the heavy rains would confine people to the village. However, there was much less seasonal variation for the women, as they had to continue to make *beijú*, weave, cook, and care for their households — the ordinary female chores, whatever the month.

Trumaí economic life was loosely organized. Few types of labor transcended the nuclear family, which was the basic unit of economic cooperation and interdependence. The inventory of material culture was sparse, and workmanship was not highly developed. What the Trumaí did not make, they could obtain by trade. From the standpoint of technology, the Trumaí were more backward than other tribes in the upper Xingú area, perhaps a reflection of their more recent settlement in the region.

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CHAPTER THREE

Trumaí Social Organization

Property Ownership

105 Trumaí society was relatively simple. There was no social stratification based on wealth, nor were the mechanisms of social control and cohesion highly developed. This was in accord with the individualization of productive effort and the low level of economic surplus. The political unit was a single community, the sole bearer of Trumaí culture.

All land and productive resources were considered the property of the community, and the right to their exploitation resided with any individual willing to expend the labor. Gardens were individual property, but only in the sense that the man who reclaimed the land from the jungle was entitled to its product. There was no concept of alienable property in land, entailing the right of disposition. The *piquí* trees were said to be owned individually, but the owner exercised exclusive rights only over the first fruits. Other wild food plants were community property and their fruits belonged to the gatherer.

The fishing rights to lagoons and backwaters of the rivers belonged to the tribes in whose territory they were located. There was no individual ownership of fishing sites.

There was property in foods, but as soon as they were cooked they were freely distributed. *Beijú* belonged to the women, but the manioc out of which it was prepared was said to be the property of the man who grew it. Such distinctions were largely academic. Actually, the men grew the vegetable and the women harvested it, prepared it, and cooked it, after which it was distributed and eaten. The same situation prevailed in regard to the products of fishing, hunting, and gathering. Salt was the only exception, as it was prepared and owned by individual men and women. The difference undoubtedly lies in the fact that salt was an important trade item, while the other commodities were not.

Very little property can be said to have belonged to the family. Baskets and gourd containers were made by the men for themselves and for the women, but they were often used by both a man and his wife. Nearly all material objects outside of natural resources were owned by the person who made them or the person to whom an object was given. House ownership was vague, since houses were built and occupied by more than one man, and abandoned when the village moved. The house, however, was often considered the property of the man who put

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105 182 648 in the Trumaí community, for, as Oberg notes, no adult male would choose to live with a people of such low status.[1]

105 162 It might be expected that the Trumaí could have compensated for this drain by raising their birth rate. However, in this population of 43 persons, there were only ten children, an extremely small number when the low average life span is considered. Furthermore, only two of the children were females. Of the approximately twelve women who 105 were capable of bearing children, only one was pregnant, and the others 163 were urging her to abort her child. Thus, infanticide and abortion were 161 taking a heavy toll in the Trumaí village.

847 845 The custom of killing twins and of spacing births three or four years apart are reported by Oberg for the Kamayurá,[2] and these factors may well have been present in the Trumaí situation. The [171] taboo on sexual intercourse had the same effect. Wagley, who studied the dying but equally unacculturated Tapirapé, found that traditional practices were contributing to the complete depopulation of that group also.[3]

105 161 178 154 But among the Trumaí there is still another and less tangible dimension. Abortion may have been urged on a pregnant woman because she had no husband, but how is one to explain the killing of two of Aloari's children without his consent, or the fact that there were eight male and only two female children in the community? The limited information available suggests that the Trumaí were purposely restricting their number and committing suicide, perhaps unintentionally, in the process. Two reasons for this extreme behavior may be hypothesized: first, the impasse in which the Trumaí found themselves because of the steady depopulation made them so personally insecure and apathetic regarding both the present and the future that they were no longer willing to rear sizable families, despite their evident devotion to children; and second, they may not have thought it possible to produce the surplus necessary to support such families. Actually, however, even with their diminished numbers the Trumaí could have increased their food supply.

105 511 433 226 Their lowered standard of living was due to more than attitudes. Loss of population no doubt also decreased the yield of Trumaí fishing and therefore limited their chief source of protein. To be sure, bow and arrow fishing was little affected, but fish poisoning, the only communal subsistence technique practiced by them, was much less effective when employed by a small group, for a few people can adequately poison only smaller watercourses and branches of lagoons, while a greater number can cover larger streams and whole lagoons. In the latter circumstance, both the take would be larger and larger species would be available. Moreover, when the waters are heavily poisoned and enough people are present to reap the "harvest," there is less chance of fish escaping. Thus, up to

[1] Oberg 1953, p. 15. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 62. [3] Wagley 1940.

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a certain point at least, the take increases geometrically with the number of persons participating.

In gardening, also, which was not practiced collectively, their small number decreased Trumaí security. It was common for nearly all the village men to plant their gardens in clearings adjacent to those of their neighbors. Obviously, if one part of such a single, extended clearing was improperly fired, or if the crops were destroyed by armadillos or wild pigs, the whole village might be without food. Crop failure for a variety of causes is common in the tropical forests, but most aboriginal communities in South America have several separated garden clearings, each owned by an individual or extended family. If one garden fails, the family can, in a period of emergency, reap from others. Oberg relates that the Trumaí once had to turn for food to the Kamayura,[4] perhaps because of the failure of the village clearing.

It is, of course, possible that in the past the Trumaí organized their gardens along the more rational lines of the Kamayurá;[5] and it is also possible that they never made a proper ecological adaptation subsequent to their arrival in the upper Xingú region. But lacking information on their economy prior to their decimation, we cannot make any firm statement on these points. However, it is certain that, despite their small numbers, the individual Trumaí could have cleared and planted much more land. The average size of the gardens observed by Quain was one-half acre, and this area had to feed up to four people. Many men also had old gardens which were planted only to manioc. According to Quain's calculations, the total acreage of Trumaí gardens was only a little over thirteen. Since yields from forest soils are not high, it is evident that this very small area must have barely met the needs of a population of 43 persons. Manifestly, the Trumaí did not work hard enough; and it seems evident that their lack of application did more to impoverish them than any other single factor.

If the other upper Xingú tribes are used as criteria to establish what Trumaí society was like before its decline, some very serious dysfunctions within Trumaí social structure soon become apparent. To be sure, such a comparison is an arbitrary procedure; and it is only invoked here for its heuristic value. Since village and house patrilocality is the usual mode of residence among the Trumaí, a household similar to that of the Kamayurá, and with like functions, might be expected and might indeed have existed in the past. However, the Trumaí death rate in 1938 was so high that these units disintegrated before they had gone beyond the embryonic stage. House membership was shifting, the number of persons involved small, and leadership nebulous. And since kinship was the principal mechanism for structuring interpersonal relationships in Trumaí society, this lack of a stable, kin-structured unit probably did

[4] Oberg 1953, p. 42. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 45.